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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE RENAISSANCE OF THE PASSION PLAY

Submitted by

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(B.A. Mount Holyoke, 1926)

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Series

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Introduction

1. Origin of the Passion Play

The origin of the so-called Passion Play is inextricably bound up with the beginnings of church drama in general as it developed in the earlier centuries of the Christian era. It is in the roots of the earliest form of the liturgical drama that one must search out its inception, and only in the growth of drama within, later outside, the Church, may one trace its development.

Shortly after the break-up of the Roman Empire, the drama as a living art practically disappeared. This was due in part to a process of natural decay within the drama itself, the inevitable result of a dissolute society; more directly upon the troubled times following the barbarian invasions into the Empire; and most of all, to the extreme hostility of the Christian Church, which saw in the debased Roman theatre all the vices of that very paganism it was so strenuously combating. As the Church grew in power and authority, becoming supreme

throughout the civilized world, her decrees became decisive, and the doom of the theatre as such was sealed.

It is one thing, however, to issue orders barring dramatic performances, and quite another to root out the deep-seated mimetic instinct in human beings. Thus it was inevitable that the art of the drama should undergo a revival in some fashion, but there is a delicious irony in the fact that this revival took place in the very heart of the church itself, and was centred directly about Christianity. Perhaps the impulses which actually motivated the dramatizing of the services of worship were desires to "wrest the pomps of the devil to a spiritual service", or else a cropping-out of the latent dramatic instinct in the very persons who had insisted upon banishing the drama.[1] More pressing than either of these two reasons seems to have been the necessity for interpretation by the clergy to the laity, who were for the most part unlettered and ignorant, of the ritual of the Church, and the Scriptures. It was essential that some system be found through which the truths of doctrine and the significance of worship could be brought home to the people.[2]

The method which naturally suggested itself was that of visualization, "acting out" the service as it took

1. E.K.Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, Vol.II, p. 1-3
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903

2. Sidney W. Clarke, The Miracle Play in England, p.5
London: William Andrews and Co., 1897

place. The celebration of the Mass was in itself a dramatic event, and the special rites which accompanied the observance of Palm Sunday and successive days in Holy Week also had dramatic possibilities. A second suggestive factor was the use of antiphonal singing in the service, introduced into Italy by Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century. By a natural progression of thought, the antiphonal singing suggested the use of dialogue.

It is at this point that we find the first examples of anything that could really be termed "drama", and it arose in the following fashion. There had been a movement in the Church, beginning in the ninth century and continuing through the eleventh, towards the elaboration of the liturgy and everything connected with it. The traditional "Antiphonarium" -- choral portions of the Mass -- seemed inadequate, and innovations were made in the form of melodies inserted into the stereotyped choral responses. The new melodies were at first sung only with vowel sounds, but in process of time, texts were set to them, and these fresh combinations of words and melody were called "tropes", a term which later on came to be applied to both dialogue and action. This represents the very earliest attempt at deliberate dramatization of the liturgy. Most important from the standpoint of the growth of liturgic drama

are the tropes of the "Introit", the portion of the Mass sung as the priest approached the altar to bless the eucharist.

Of these, the most important was the "Quem Quaeritis", which seems to have developed by the tenth century, and which survives for us in its earliest and simplest form in a manuscript from the monastery of St. Gall. In this Easter trope, dialogue and mimetic action have finally come together:

"Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, o Christocolae?
Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae.

Non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat.
Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro!"

It will be seen that this was nothing more elaborate than a repetition of the dialogue between the three Maries and the angel at the tomb, as recounted in the Easter accounts of Matthew and Luke. By way of illustrating how this simple form grew into a more complex one through accretion, we quote another "Quem Quaeritis" which is found in the Bodeleian manuscript dating from 979:

"Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, Christicolae?

(Sanctarum mulierum responsio:)
Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae!

(Angelicae voces consolatus:)
Non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat;
Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit, dicentes:

(Sanctarum mulierum ad omnem clerum modulatio:)
Alleluia! resurrexit Dominus hodie,
Leo fortis, Christus filius Dei! Deo
gratias dicite, eia!

(Dicat angelus:)
Venite et videte locum ubi positus erat
Dominus,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

(Iterum dicat angelus:)
Cito euntes dicite discipulis quia sur-
rexit Dominus,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

(Mulieri una voce canant iubilantes:)
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro,
Qui pro nobis pependit in ligno." [1]

The early rudimentary representation which was the real basis for the Passion Play which later developed, was the "Planctus", or lament of the women and St. John at the Cross. In addition to this, there was a ceremony known as the "Depositio Crucis" which also was performed on Good Friday and was a sequel to the old fourth century custom of "Creeping to the Cross". A hollowed place beneath the altar was originally employed as a resting-place for the cross which was laid away on Good Friday, but eventually sepulchres of wood or stone were erected in the churches for this purpose. On Good Friday the cross was placed in the sepulchre with appropriate ceremonies during the Mass, and was then "guarded" during the nights preceding Easter and the joyful raising. In the

1. E.K.Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II, p. 7-17

"accompts" for St. Helen's, Abingdon, in 1558, there appears this item: "To the sexton for meat and drink and watching the sepultre according to custom, - 22s."[1]

2. Development of the Passion Play through the Middle Ages

The evolution of the liturgic play was complete about the middle of the thirteenth century, from which point the drama gradually became secularized. This change was an important one for the Passion Play, since during this period of transition there developed side by side with the old "Quem Quaeritis" a real Passion Play. The first recorded one took place at Sienna, about 1200, and there is also a record of one -- a "Passion and Resurrection" -- in Padua, 1244. The earliest text of a Passion Play is found in a manuscript from the Benedictbeuern monastery.

Apparently at this time, the Passion Play took on some resemblance to the form into which the Christmas Play had developed, in that it began to include material from earlier sections of the Bible story (extending back even as far as the Fall) as well as later portions (like the Ascension). The occasional early manuscripts which show this development are but

1. Katherine Lee Bates, English Religious Drama, p.9,10 Macmillan Co., 1917

foreshadowings of the all-inclusive "cycles" of plays which are distinctive of mediaeval drama as early as the fourteenth century. When once the Nativity and Passion scenes have been bound together by their common prologue from the Old Testament, and also expanded to include the Judgment Day, the framework of the cycle was completed and could gain only in detail, not in outline.

Throughout all this development may be traced the increasing secular influence, which was felt as soon as the plays were transferred from the church to the outdoors, a change necessitated both by the increasing length of the productions and by the need for a larger space for the more elaborate settings. (The transfer first took place in the twelfth century.) It is easy to see how, freed from the limitations of church walls and church services, the plays soon ran to such length that they required two days for performance, -- of the entire cycle, that is.

By the time the plays had expanded to such an extent, it was necessary for another change to take place: the laity were now called upon to act since the number of clergy was not sufficient to fill all the parts. Once the people themselves had entered actively into the productions, they behaved a lit-

tle like the camel in the old story, completely ousting the clergy who had invited them in, and occupying the whole tent themselves. That is to say, the management of the plays passed completely into the hands of the workmen's guilds by whom they were financed and controlled.

Together with these developments in the organization of the cycles, came natural changes within the content of the plays. In place of the ponderous Latin, largely incomprehensible to the people, was substituted the vernacular. The plays were no longer chanted and sung, as they had been in their liturgical form, but were spoken in dialogue. Emphasis was placed on the secular and comic elements, like the blustering Herod. The Latin ecclesiastical drama had been universal, even as the Mass of the Church; its secularized forms now became nationalized developing differently in the various countries of Europe. Even the time of the presentations was changed -- from Christmas and Easter when the weather was sure to be inclement, to the milder summer months. The cycles came to be associated with the procession of the carrying of the Host on Corpus Christi Day, and even when they became independent, kept this processional character by moving about the town from station to station.

In the four northerly cycles in England which all

had a kernel of common matter drawn from the liturgical and earliest vernacular drama, the Passion was represented in the narrower sense, centering on the "Planctus" (that is the lamentations of the women and John at the Cross) and extending from the conspiracy of the Jews to the Descent from the Cross. A curious variation occurs in the York cycle with the introduction of the figure of Satan who is represented as anxious to save the life of Christ, lest he die to save men and so deprive the devil of his work! In the Norwich cycle, the Passion is entirely omitted.[1] In the third cycle of the Townely mysteries, it was presented with great realism, every detail of physical torture being forced into prominence, and then offset by farcical scenes like the casting of lots for the seamless garment, and the Harrowing of Hell.[2] For other towns, there are records of Passion Plays in Reading, 1508; Shrewsbury, 1567; London, 1557, and between 1613 and 1622. To the very end, the texts of the plays bear traces of their liturgical beginnings: the music is reminiscent of church melodies, and the dialogue in critical portions follows the traditional lines pretty closely, even reverting to the original Latin occasionally.

1. E.K.Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II, p.39-148
2. Katherine Lee Bates, English Religious Drama, p.81-85

3. Passing of the Cyclical Plays

The passing of these cycles of plays came through their gradual transformation into another sort of drama, the humanistic, modelled once more on classical lines. The miracle play was modified both as to subject and through the "adaptation of theme and method to other forms of entertainment not strictly dramatic." While not superseding the miracle plays, the moralities which developed through this modification of subject-matter, gave a new trend to mediaeval drama. The introduction of historical personages into the moralities, and of types of real life side of the abstract figures, made possible the transition from moralities to regular drama. Nevertheless, both miracle and morality plays continued well into the Elizabethan Age after the legitimate drama -- now no longer classical, but distinctively English -- was occupying the stage.[1]

1. Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol. VII, p.532

Chapter One

Characteristics of the Modern Passion Drama

1. Contemporary Passion Plays

As we have tried to show in the Introduction, it was the religion of the Middle Ages which provided the real impetus to the development of dramatic technique through the cyclical mystery plays. It seems only just, then, that the highly-developed modern drama should take up once again the subject-matter of the ancient miracle plays, setting it off to greater advantage by a much finer structure than was possible in the loosely knit cycles.

For the purpose of studying the interesting changes which have taken place in the dramatic treatment of the Passion of Jesus, we are considering nine plays on the subject by modern authors, representing the literature of four different countries, -- America, England, Ireland, and Belgium. Five of these are rather outstanding:

1. Jesus: A Passion Play, Max Ehrmann
2. The Story Brought by Brigit, Lady Gregory
3. Mary Magdalene, Maurice Maeterlinck
4. The Trial of Jesus, John Masefield
5. The Dark Hours, Don Marquis

Four are interesting, but of lesser importance:

1. The Upper Room, Robert Hugh Benson
2. Thy Kingdom Come, Florence Converse
3. The Terrible Meek, Charles Rann Kennedy
4. Good Friday (a dramatic poem), John Masefield

2. General Distinctions from the Mediaeval Treatment of the Passion

It needs only a casual glance at any one of these texts to reveal immediately striking differences in the author's very approach to his material, from the Passion Plays of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the early Middle Ages, a straightforward dramatization of the Bible narratives as they stood, carried its own appeal, for religious emotion was dear to the heart of the people, and was easily aroused. Even later on in the development of the cycles, when the secular note had crept in, the purpose of the presentations was always avowedly religious. The Passion portions of the miracles were simply dramatic expositions of the dogma of salvation, with the human elements as such pretty well subordinated. Almost without exception -- the possible exception being Robert Benson -- the authors of these modern plays have approached their subject from a secular viewpoint, stressing the essential element of drama in the purely human values of the narrative. More of this anon!

In the second place, an author selecting as his theme the heroic death of Jesus of Nazareth, is confronted by a difficulty which did not exist in the Middle Ages: I mean the reluctance of a religiously-minded audience to watch an impersonation of the figure of the divine Jesus upon the stage. Whereas the Middle Ages were insistent that Jesus should be actually represented in order the more to emphasize his humanity, the twentieth century has been and still is exceedingly uneasy in the face of what it has come to regard as sacrilige -- the impersonation of the divine. For this reason, the authors who have respected this limitation have produced the curious paradox of a play about a hero -- with the hero in absentia, save for a voice offstage! Don Marquis, in an appended note to The Dark Hours explains his position. He had fully intended to represent the person of Jesus upon the stage, but changed his plan, for "You cannot show Divinity upon the stage; you cannot get an actor to impersonate Divinity. You may show humanity in juxtaposition to Divinity, acted upon by Divinity and responding in one way or another to the contact -- but Divinity itself: no! the thing is impossible."[1] Jesus, of course, is not the hero of Maeterlinck's Mary Magdalene, but he is the person upon whom depends the development of her character. Yet here again, he is represented only by A Voice. In John Masefield's dramatic poem Good Friday there is a significant stage direction: as the troops pass out of the courtyard, the Prisoner (i.e., Jesus) is not shown, only suggested. In Benson's The Upper Room, the audience sees only

1. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, Author's Note

the top of a cross which moves along behind a parapet outside the window. In the other two minor texts, Thy Kingdom Come and The Terrible Meek, the action takes place after the Passion and Crucifixion, which is thus only described to the audience. In Lady Gregory's Story Brought by Brigit, the Christ appears only for a moment or two, while in Ehrmann's play and Masefield's Trial of Jesus, the figure of Jesus appears throughout. Whether the devices employed for avoiding his actual representation on the stage rob these plays of dramatic value, or whether on the other hand, the appearance of his person detracts from the dignity of the drama will be discussed later when the plays are taken up more in detail.

The third distinction between the modern and mediaeval texts is the extreme individuality of each of the nine plays under consideration as opposed to the patterned miracles Passions. The modern authors have selected each a different focal point about which to centre their plays, rather than merely starting at the beginning and following through the story as recorded in the Gospels, with the result that the atmosphere of each is quite distinctive.

The next section of this paper aims to discuss in some detail the five major and four minor texts listed above, in an effort to discover how the individual authors have approached their subject-matter as to plot, character-interpretation, and distinctive contributions to the story.

3. Detailed Examination of Methods in treating the Passion story

A. Treatment of Plot

In one or another of the nine texts, practically all the incidents told in the Gospel stories are included in one form or another. The table which follows on page 35 at the conclusion of this section on "Plot", presents a detailed list of these.

Four plays begin before Jesus' seizure by the mob, and work up to his accusation and trial. One of these ends a short time before the Crucifixion, two end during the Crucifixion, and the fourth concludes with Mary's vision of a resurrected Christ. Two plays begin with Jesus on trial and end after the Crucifixion. One takes place just before and during the Crucifixion; another, while Jesus is dead on the Cross; and the remaining one, while he is in the tomb. This alone is sufficient to indicate how divergent the plays are from one another, though each has the same subject-matter to work with. Perhaps this will appear still more clearly from outlines of the plots.

The Dark Hours

Scene I. The High Priest Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas, are examining witnesses who may be used in an action against the Nazarene Jesus. Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot are among them, but while Mary bears nothing but love for Christ, it is soon evident that Judas is bent on betraying him, because he resents the peculiar psychological control which Jesus seems to exercise over him.

Scene II. Jesus and his disciples converse for a bit in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus being hidden from the audience by the shadows. While the disciples are sleeping and Jesus is praying, Judas enters with a company of men to seize Jesus. A stage direction suggests that there be a flicker of fireflies in the darkness, "as if a line of sparks were shot out of one mind across the dark into another mind and shot back again". The incident of the wounding and healing of the High Priest's servant's ear is included as if incidentally, but bears fruit in a later scene. After the mob has taken Jesus away, only Malchus and Peter remain with Judas who cries out, "It is done! It is done! And I burn! I burn!"[1]

Scene III. Jesus is tried befor the Sanhedrin. In the intervals of the trial when the voices of testifying witnesses die down temporarily in the Judgment Hall whose door only can be seen clearly by the audience, the conversation of persons in the courtyard below becomes distinguishable, so that Peter's three dnials are heard. When the crowd in the Hall cries out for Jesus' death, Malchus, remembering the kindness shown him in the Garden, attempts a rescue and is killed. As the crowd passes down from the Judgment Hall, Judas intercepts Caiaphas and tries to give back the money which was the price of his treachery, but he is struck aside, and after the crowd has gone, is left alone with Peter.

> Judas: Oh God! that I had been faithful to him as thou hast been!
> Peter: As I have been! As I have been![2]

1. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, Scene 2, p. 59
2. " " " " " Scene 3, p. 104

Scene IV. Jesus is tried and condemned by Pilate. In the confusion of this act, all the small episodes related in the Gospel narrative are included: Herod's messenger arrives advising that Jesus be crucified and offering a pledge of friendship to Pilate; Procula comes and tells of her dream, but without result; the mob shouts for Barabbas; Pilate gives the sentence of death, washes his hands publicly and orders the writing of the scroll on the Cross.

Scene V. "The effect is that we are at the edge of the hill of Calvary, and that Jesus is hanging on the cross just offstage, and that all are looking at him there."[1] The soldiers dice for the seamless garment; the two thieves are heard speaking; and Jesus speaks from the Cross to Mary and John. After his last words, "It is finished!" the crowd flees in terror, only John and the three Maries remaining with the centurion who concludes, "Truly this was the Son of God."

As Marquis himself states in his "Author's Note", the movement of his play closely follows the outline of the Gospel narrative while still conforming to the requirements of dramatic technique. That is, there is no new material introduced so far as the action itself goes, unless it be the minor detail of Lazarus' entrance in the scene before Pilate's palace. There is nothing especially original in this treatment of the plot, then, save for one fact -- Jesus is the principal in all five scenes, and yet is never once seen by the audience. This is managed by a variety of neat devices. In the first scene, Jesus is supposedly outside the High Priest's

1. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, Scene 5, p. 143

house, but he is not seen by the audience, though persons in the play look out of the window at him. In Scene 2, the moon is obscured by clouds and the stage is partially dark so that it "may give the audience the impression at times that if it were not for the dark, they could really see him".[1] This to my mind is the most powerful of all the scenes because the spiritual presence of Jesus is so distinctly felt without any danger of spoiling that "inner vision by a parade of externalities". In the scenes of Jesus before the High Priest and Pilate respectively, his non-appearance is skilfully managed by having the trials take place just within another room into which the audience cannot quite penetrate. In both cases, the curtain is dropped for a moment at the conclusion of the scenes to permit of Jesus' passing off the stage unseen. Once again, in the last scene, the audience is just able to see the cross over the edge of the hill.

If it is, as Mr. Marquis says, impossible to present Divinity upon the stage, he has avoided doing so very ingeniously, while still maintaining the atmosphere of strength and power which waits upon Divinity. At the same time, there are attendant difficulties. It would be an extremely difficult matter, I should think, to keep this atmosphere solely through the inflections of the Voice which is speaking. Furthermore, there is a possibility that with the focal point so definitely offstage in the last scene, there might come a drop of interest.

1. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, p. 42

Jesus: A Passion Play

Act I. On a morning before the feast of the Passover, a group of servants is engaged in cleaning the Court of the Gentiles at the Temple, and is discussing the coming of the Messias, according to the beliefs of the age. The money-changers and animal-venders come in and set up their booths, raising a great clamor. Terreno, a Roman legionary, enters with Mary Magdalene who speaks cryptically concerning her love for Jesus of Nazareth whom she has seen but once. Judas Iscariot comes in and discusses Jesus with one of the latter's brothers who thinks Jesus is possessed of devils. As the worshippers at the Temple are complaining bitterly about the thievery of the money-changers, Jesus comes in and drives them out, while the crowd, mad with enthusiasm, shouts, "We will follow him!"

Act II. In the Temple Court the following morning, the traders are disputing about Jesus -- what manner of man he is. When the priests and scribes enter, they are besieged with requests to be allowed to bring back the animals for sale. One of the rabbis craftily leads on Judas -- who is still devoted to Jesus -- to promise to betray him, so that he will be forced to proclaim himself Messiah, as Judas believes he is. When Jesus comes himself, the Pharisees tempt him with questions. Then Mary Magdalene is dragged in and brought to Jesus for judgment, but her accusers slink off before the command, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone at her." The scene ends as Jesus is left alone with Mary and recognizes her for the first time:

Mary: Oh Master, Master!
Jesus (startled): Magdalene!
Mary: Master! Master!
Jesus: Mary.

Act III. In the evening of the same day, the disciples are conversing in the Garden of Gethsemane. They are all in a highly nervous state apparently waiting for some kind of "sign". Jesus is with them for awhile, but goes aside to pray. The disciples sleep. Young John Mark comes to Jesus and entreats him to flee from the threatening danger. Judas comes in with a company of soldiers led by Terreno, and they bind Jesus, while Judas stands by urging him to reveal himself as the Messiah.

Act IV. Jesus is tried before Pilate, while the priests call for his condemnation. At first Judas pleads with them to spare Jesus, and then when Jesus is sent down among the mob, begs him once more to manifest his power. Jesus is scourged (offstage) and mocked by the soldiers and the mob. In the end, Pilate's opposition to the priests is overcome and he says in disgust: "Take your king. Crucify him."

Act V. Joseph of Arimathea and his servants remove the body of Jesus from the garden tomb and bear it away to a lonely spot that his enemies may not disinter it for further desecration. Joseph delivers a long monologue addressed to Jesus. Mary, Joanna and Salome come to anoint the body and find it gone (for Joseph has left before they arrive.) Joanna and Salome are fearful and hurry away, but Mary

remains to talk to Terreno who has come upon the scene and once more urges her to come to him. She is deaf to his voice, but says she hears heavenly voices, and then, that she sees Jesus.

> Mary(rising): Look, there he goes past the door of the tomb! (She rushes out and is heard calling) Peter, John, Joanna, I have seen him! He has come out of the tomb!

In this play again, the order of the Gospel story has been followed rather carefully, but there are extra events included: the episode of Mary Magdalene in the Temple, of Mark warning Jesus, and of course the whole last act in which the body of Jesus is removed from the tomb by human agency. This last episode is in line with Mr. Ehrmann's determination to strip "the persons who founded Christianity of supernatural embellishment". His attitude towards Jesus is interesting as that of one who cannot accept the miraculous elements in the story of Jesus' life, and yet who is captured by the idealism of the life itself. The fact that he <u>has</u> approached his subject from an altogether secular viewpoint is reflected in his portrayal of the personality of Jesus, which will be discussed in the section "Character Interpretation".

A second interesting development in this play is the emphasis laid upon Mary Magdalene. She is really the heroine of the drama, and while she plays a rôle subordinate to that of Jesus, one feels that her part might easily be expanded to make her the focal point as she is in Maeterlinck's play.

Mary Magdalene

Act I. Verus, a Roman legionary, comes to visit Silanus, another Roman who has settled down in Judea, and there meets Mary Magdalene with whom he has been in love for some time. Mary speaks of the theft of her jewels which she believes have been stolen by the band of the Nazarene, and this introduces a discussion of him and his followers. Verus and Mary have a short dialogue by themselves in which Verus tells her of his love. With the entrance of the other guests, their private talk is interrupted, and the conversation again turns to Jesus who, it appears, is stopping next door at the house of one Simon, formerly a leper, but now cured by Jesus. As the voice of Jesus is heard speaking through the hedge which separates them, Mary is irresistibly drawn towards him. She passes through the hedge, and the crowd, when it recognizes who she is, attempt to stone her, but are restrained by Jesus' quiet words. Mary returns to Silanus' house unharmed, and in a strangely subdued mood.

Act II. Mary and Verus are chatting. Mary recalls the day spent at the house of Silanus and the events which transpired there. This leads her to inquire what has become of Jesus, and she learns that Verus has orders to arrest him. Silanus and Appius enter and tell how they saw Lazarus raised from the dead. Lazarus himself comes like a ghost to Mary's house, at this point, and says to her, "Come, the Master calls you." Mary goes out after him, "amid the profound still, silence of all present".

Act III. Various cripples whom Jesus has healed, and some whom he has not, are together in the room where the Last Supper had taken place. It is the house of Joseph of Arimathea. They are discussing the news that Jesus has been taken captive when Mary Magdalene enters and urges the assemblage to attempt a rescue. When Verus comes, Mary tries to persuade him to save Jesus, but he refuses unless she will give herself to him. This she will not do, though all the crowd in the room, not understanding, cry out against her. A tumult in the street shows that Jesus is being led to Calvary, but Mary "remains motionless as though in ecstasy and all illumined with the light of the dparting torches."

Of the three plays so far discussed, this is the most divergent from the original Gospel account. It is easier to tell what part of the original is maintained, than to list the additions. The episode of Jesus and Mary is hardly part of the Passion story, but may legitimately be used here, since the exact time of its occurrence is not recorded. The other episode drawn from the Bible account is that of Jesus bearing his cross to Calvary and falling under the weight of it -- a scene described by some of the cripples who are looking out of the window of the gouse. Aside from these two scenes, the plot is purely fictional. Maeterlinck, like Marquis, has left the figure of Jesus off the stage, and yet here again he is the dominating influence before whom all others -- even Mary herself, supposedly the principal character in the play, fade into

insignificance. This is especially remarkable because of the very small part Jesus plays in the three acts. Quite naturally all the words and actions seem to point towards the "azarene, whether sympathetically or otherwise.

The Story Brought by Brigit

Act I. Joel, a mountain boy, and Daniel, a tramp, are discussing the coming of a new teacher who, they hope, will turn out to be the promised Messiah. Brigit comes in, in pilgrim costume, and tells them how she was foster-mother to the Child when he and his mother were in Ireland, and how now she has come to Palestine because she's had a vision of him in trouble. They go off. Silas a Scribe, and Marcus, a Roman Soldier, enter, and Silas tries to convince Marcus that Jesus is dangerous and should be dealt with by the Roman government. Jesus himself comes in then attended by a large company of people. Silas urges one of the younger scribes to tempt Jesus with questions, but to his confusion, the young man is convinced by Jesus' answers and kneels among his followers! Jesus then goes on his way through the gate into Jerusalem. Judas enters, and Silas bribes him to betray Jesus.

Act II. In the morning, when Jesus is being tried before Pilate's palace, Joel tries to organize a band to rescue him, but fails because Silas has influenced the crowd in the other direction. Daniel, being in Silas' pay, leads the mob in shouting, "Down Nazarene, up Pilate!" Pilate addressed the crowd scornfully, is somewhat im-

pressed by Procula's vivid account of her dream, tries to shift his responsibility to Herod, but in the end, orders Jesus crucified.

Act III. The women are by the roadside from which they can see the preparations going on for Jesus' death. He appears, followed by Mary, John and Brigit, and after he has spoken comfortingly to the women, the procession moves on to Calvary. The soldiers who remain by the roadside, cast dice for the seamless garment. Judas enters, and rushes off with a rope. Mary comes down the hill alone and the women keen for her and for Jesus, till John says, "Give over keening. Look at that brightness." He hears Jesus speaks and repeats the words to the women, until they fade away into silence.

Though this play includes the outstanding incidents of the Passion -- Judas' corruption, the trial before Pilate, and the hard journey to Calvary -- its tone is different from any of the others. The bare facts of the story are shot through and colored with the sweet love of the women for Christ which thus transforms all the bitterness in the play. Its ultimate end, one feels, is not despair but hope:

> Brigit: That God may bring us to the same joy his blessed soul returned to!
> The Women: Oh blessed Christ![1]

The Trial of Jesus

Act I. A priest, Zadok, reads the charges against Jesus to Annas in the house of the High Priest. Caiaphas enters and tells how his

1. Lady Gregory, The Story Brought by Brigit, Act III, p. 88

sermon aroused one of the patriots, Bar-Abbas by name, to attempt an insurrection. Jesus is tried before the council of priests and admits that he is the Christ. He is left alone with some of the servants of the household who mock him. Peter denies Jesus, in the courtyard, and Judas returns and tries to make the priests take back the thirty pieces of silver.

Act II. Pilate holds court to judge Jesus, and finally sends him to Herod. He has been impressed by Jesus' manner, however, and repeats some of the words Jesus has spoken, concluding, "An odd fellow, that; a lot in him".[1] Procula enters and tells her dream, but Pilate maintains that Jesus is a dangerous man because he is passionate and may arouse others. He and Procula go off together. The three Maries come in and discuss what may happen to Jesus. The crowd returns from Herod's palace to Pilate's and chooses Bar-Abbas to be released to them. Pilate questions Jesus further and finally condemns him to death. Jesus is led off after speaking to the three Maries.

Act III. Herod and Pilate meet and become reconciled. Longinus, a centurion, comes to report that Bar-Abbas has been re-arrested for rioting. Pilate and Herod go off and Longinus remains to tell Procula of the Crucifixion. He says he doesn't believe that Jesus is dead.

> Procula: Then where is he?
> Longinus: Let loose in the world, lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.[2]

1. John Masefield, The Trial of Jesus, Act II, p. 67
2. " " " " " " Act III, p. 111

After Longinus and Procula have gone, Jesus re-enters and soliloquizes!

For some strange reason, Masefield has elected to set this play of the Passion in a framework of choruses which are almost Grecian in effect. They are no integral part of the drama but occur at the beginning and ending of the first act, as a cover-scene in the second act, and at the end of the play. Somehow the choruses seem strangely incongruous with the subject-matter. The plot as a whole is not well-knit, but jerks along, giving the impression that the author is doing his best to include all the incidents he can to give authority to the play, regardless whether they break the main thread of the plot or not.

Good Friday

This is really a dramatic poem rather than a legitimate play. The course of action is as follows: Pilate orders Longinus to spare Jesus in the scourging which has been commanded as much as possible. Procula comes to tell Pilate her dream. Then a Jew seeks to influence Pilate against Jesus. Pilate goes out and a Madman enters and harangues the crowd about Jesus' real goodness and greatness. After sentence of death has been pronounced upon Jesus, and the troops have borne him away, Procula returns and in a moment of hysteria stabs her arm that the blood may flow as Jesus' did. Joseph of Ramah comes to ask Pilate's permission to remove the body from the cross. Longinus comes back from Calvary and des-

cribes the Crucifixion in vivid terms. Herod enters and he and Pilate pledge each other friendship and peace henceforward. The crowd goes off for the Passover feast.

Just as in The Trial, the plot in this poem-drama is scarcely bound together. No special incidents have been developed with real dramatic force, but rather, a great number have been included just for the sake of working in all the possible material: as for for example, Peter's denials, Pilate's careful orders about the scroll to be placed on the cross, Joseph's request, and Pilate's reconciliation with Herod. The incident of Procula's stabbing herself in the arm is sheer melodrama for which there is no preparation and which itself leads to nothing. Furthermore, one grows a bit weary of the old device of the madman who speaks more sanely than the sane -- in however beautiful language! In short, Good Friday to my mind is merely an elaboration in lovely verse of the Bible version of the events leading to the Crucifixion. It is the least interesting of the texts, and is significant only in the fact of its existence, and the implication of its stage direction, "The Prisoner is not shown, only suggested."

The Terrible Meek

The scene is on a wind-swept hill, in a time of darkness. There is thunder, wind, a Cry sounding above the confused clamor of many voices and the hurrying of many feet. There follows a sud-

den hush broken only by the sound of a woman weeping. An Army Captain comes to her and vainly attempts to persuade her to leave. A Soldier enters and he and the Captain discuss the event which has just taken place -- a Crucifixion -- and show some sympathy for the weeping woman, who, the Captain says, is the victim's mother. They agree that the man crucified had done nothing really bad, and the Captain speaks sarcastically about performing one's duty for duty's sake. The Soldier cannot follow these heretical statements and becomes a little resentful.

> Captain: Duty! We talk of Duty! What sort of devil's duties are there in the world, do you think, when they lead blindly, wantonly, wickedly, to the murder of such a man as this!
> Soldier: Well, far as I'm concerned, I only obeyed my orders.[1]

He adds that the man is dead anyhow, and out of his troubles, but the Captain is not so sure: "Life is a terrible, a wonderful thing. You can't kill it. . . It comes back, it can't die, it rises again."[2] This sort of thinking is beyond the Soldier and he takes his departure. The Woman speaks aloud in agony, slowly reviewing her son's life. The Captain comes and tries to console her, saying her son is still alive, and that all the Empires couldn't kill him. He will establish a new Kingdom requiring a new kind of soldier. At this point the Soldier returns and tells the Captain that the General has another job for him of the same kind. The Captain refuses to go, though he knows what it will mean for him to dis-

1. Charles Rann Kennedy, The Terrible Meek, p. 19
2. " " " " " " p. 23

obey orders. The Soldier is sorry and embarrassed and finally says, "Look, sir, wot did I tell you? It's comin' light again." To which the Captain returns, "Eternally."[1] The place is filled with an unearthly splendor, and there towering above the three persons are three gaunt crosses.[2]

The slender plot of this play is purely imaginative. It starts with one fact --the Crucifixion-- and goes on from there to show the influence of the spirit of Jesus after his death, rather than the occurrences of his own life. There is very little action, the interest of the play depending on the emotion of the words and the suspense as to who the persons are which is resolved with the revealing of the crosses. The principal thing is the tone of rising hope instead of eternal despair.

Thy Kingdom Come

Three soldiers guard the tomb of Jesus in the Garden -- the Soldier of the Thorns, of the Lance, and of the Seamless Garment. They are discussing Jesus and the things he used to teach. There is a general feeling of apprehension among them -- lest Jesus come out of the tomb, for example. A group of Galilean children come to bring flowers and palms to lay on the tomb. As each puts down his or her offering, he says, "Master, remember me when you come into your kingdom." They tell their simple, child-faith

1. Charles Rann Kennedy, The Terrible Meek, p. 43
2. " " " " " " p. 64, 65

in Jesus to the soldiers with whom they easily make friends. The Daughter of Jairus is sure he will rise again, for he raised her from the dead. She says her father is discouraged about it, though.

> Jairus' Daughter: He seems to think the cross was the end of it all when it's only the beginning.
> Soldier of the Lance: The beginning of what, Missy?
> Jairus' Daughter: Of the Kingdom.[1]

The youngest Child repeats a story she has heard Jesus tell about the Kingdom, and then the others all add their ideas about it -- how there will be no hunger, no death, etc. The children are called home, and after they have left, the Soldiers sleep and dream. The dreams are personified, and come in holding the instruments of the Passion, and remain while the soldiers, talking in their sleep, tell the story of the mockery and Crucifixion. The dreams pass out in a slow procession, but enlightenment has come to the soldiers.

> Soldier of the Lance: Behold, by the Cross joy hath come to the whole world!
> Soldier of the Thorns: By the Cross!
> Soldier of the Coat: Joy!
> Soldier of the Lance: Hath come to the whole world![2]

The white angels of the Resurrection come from behind the tomb, scatter flowers before it and roll the stone aside, then stand with bowed heads, "their reverent hands folded over their eyes in the darkness before dawn."[3]

Like The Terrible Meek, this short play is imaginative and thoroughly charming. Unlike the others, it goes further afield

1. Florence Converse, Thy Kingdom Come, p.69
2. " " " " " p. 95
3. " " " " " p. 96

and frankly introduces an unreal element in the little dreams who are only symbols after all, but nevertheless change the play from one of straightforward realism into the realm of the fanciful.

The Upper Room

Act I. Samuel, a young boy, is kneeling in the Upper Room, leaning over the parapet and listening to Jesus' voice outside, "I am the true vine" . . . The voice ceases, Achaz enters, and Samuel implores him to save Jesus from the danger which he feels sure is threatening. He tells Achaz about the Last Supper which has taken place in that very room, and how Judas went out into the night with a "devil-driven face". At the sound of a crowd passing below, Samuel goes out, intending to follow it. Enter Joseph of Arimathea with Mary Magdalene who also fears some harm will befall the Master. Enter Mary Mother who is greeted with all reverence. Samuel returns with the news that Jesus has been taken. A procession, of which only the glare of torches, and spearheads, are seen, passes beneath the window.

Act II. Samuel tells Achaz of Jesus' torture which he has just witnessed. Mary Mother comes in and kneels by the parapet, leaning out. Judas bursts in, a rope across his shoulders. He has come to revisit the scene of the Last Supper, but dashes out in despair when he sees Mary. Enter Mary Magdalene, crying out that they must save Jesus somehow. John comes in to take Mary to Calvary. A pro-

cession passes under the window. Three crosses are seen. The last one falls and Mary Magdalene cries out in agony. They all leave except Samuel who kneels alone by the table. There is darkness and thunder. The crosses may be seen in the distance through the open window. Achaz comes back and Samuel tells him he has had a dream about Mary: "'Tis us she bore today with ten-fold mother's pangs." Peter comes in despairingly, but Mary assures him of her forgiveness. The instruments of the Passion are all laid before Mary, together with the Cup used in the Last Supper, and Veronica's handkerchief. Mary speaks:

> - - - - - - Weep for those sins; and see
> That by good penance and His Precious Blood
> All shall be done away when forth he comes
> To meet us all again on Easter Day;
> And we be comforted, my Son and I. [1]

After the Curtain, there is a final tableau about the Cross.

It is curious to note in this play how the emphasis has been neatly shifted from Jesus to his mother Mary. It is her influence to which Magdalene, Judas, and Peter react rather than, as in the other texts, Jesus' own. Samuel does not have a vision of what Jesus is going to mean to the world, but of what his death meant to Mary:

> - - - -I've striven to understand
> Not why my Lord was slain, for that I think I know;
> But why his mother agonized beside him.
> - - -
> Sir, see you not that God designed her pain
> That she might be a mother by her pangs
> Of all Eve's children? [2]

1. Robert Hugh Benson, The Upper Room, p. 71, 72

2. " " " " " " p. 58, 59

The "precious instruments" together with Veronica's handkerchief and the Cup have taken on a certain mystical significance, obviously a reflection of Catholic dogma. This is the only one of the nine plays written strictly from a religious viewpoint and for definitely religious ends. It is also the only one, except Good Friday and the choruses in The Trial to be written in verse.

Table showing the Incidents of the Passion as they appear in the different texts

Palm Sunday
- The Story Brought by Brigit

Cleansing the Temple
- Jesus: A Passion Play

The Adulteress
- Jesus: A Passion Play
- Mary Magdalene

Miracles of Healing
- The Dark Hours

John and James ask for place
- The Dark Hours

In the House of the High Priests
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial of Jesus

The Corruption of Judas
- Jesus
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial
- Story Brought by Brigit

Gethsemane
- Jesus
- The Dark Hours

Trial Before High Priests
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial

Peter's Denial
- The Dark Hours
- Good Friday
- Trial

Trial Before Pilate
- Jesus
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial
- Story Brought by Brigit
- Upper Room (described)

Procula's Dream
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial
- Good Friday
- Story Brought by Brigit

Pilate washing his Hands
- The Dark Hours

Scourging and Mockery
- Jesus
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial

Herod's Reconciliation
- The Dark Hours
- The Trial
- Good Friday

Pilate's Writing on the Cross
- The Trial
- Good Friday
- The Dark Hours

Golgotha
- The Dark Hours
- Story Brought by Brigit
- The Terrible Meek
- Good Friday (described)
- The Trial (described)

Dicing for Seamless Coat
- The Dark Hours
- Story Brought by Brigit
- Thy Kingdom Come (described)

The Thieves Speak
- The Dark Hours

Joseph asks for Jesus' Body
- Good Friday

Resurrection
- Jesus

Judas' Remorse
- The Dark Hours
- Story Brought by Brigit

B. Character Interpretation

Nowhere does the individualism of an author appear more distinctly than in his interpretation of a character whose outlines have already been at least partially sketched in by tradition. The names of Jesus and Judas, Pilate and Caiaphas, Peter and John, carry definite connotations. Each occupies a certain place in the Gospel narratives. Each has been interpreted as standing for rather definite things, -- Jesus the Redeemer, Judas the Betrayer, Pilate the Coward, Caiaphas the Cruel, the Beloved John and Impetuous Peter. But in spite of these facts, the characters who have been created in the various plays, though they bear the same names, differ radically from one another in some cases. The Jesus of Ehrmann's play by that name is entirely different from the hero of Marquis' Dark Hours, as is Masefield's Judas from Marquis' Judas. The explanation seems to be that each author has taken his characters and interpreted them from the special point of view of his own human sympathies. A closer analysis of the principal figures will indicate some of these similarities and divergencies.

Jesus

Jesus is developed as a real personality in four of the plays, although as was mentioned above, he never appears actually in the Dark Hours. In three of them, -- The Dark Hours, The Trial, and The Story Brought by Brigit -- he is made to say and do pretty much the actual words and deeds recorded of him in the New Testament. Don Marquis explains that in the case of Jesus he has used the exact speeches written

in the Gospels, although he has "elaborated, interpreted, --created" the other characters. But he has skilfully selected those portions which build up the strongest impression of Jesus. There are the cures effected outside the house of the High Priest in the first scene, to show his love not only for 'humanity' but for people! There are the words of comfort to the disciples in the Garden, "Yet a little while" . . "A new commandment give I unto you" . . . There is the Agony of Gethsemane, emphasizing his human side and his power to follow the ideal, turning his back on the easy way. Finally, there is the victorious cry from the Cross, "Father, into Thy hands" . . . This choice of speeches, added to the constant sense that Jesus is actually present, though unseen, makes of him a real character, not simply a puppet.

On the other hand, Masefield in The Trial has also used Biblical speeches practically entirely for Jesus himself. But the impression left by his Jesus is purely negative. He is silent when he should speak, and unconvincing when he talks - as though he were silent through fear, and as though he were evading Pilate's questions rather than answering with straightforward frankness. It is difficult to understand why Pilate should be impressed by him at all, as he appears to be. The reason for all this seems to be that while all the other characters are built up emotionally to a certain extent, the speeches of Jesus are quite unemotional: instead of reaching the peak of the climax, they fall short every time because one is

constantly keyed up to expect a revelation of strong personality which never is given. The result is that Jesus is very weakly characterized, thus causing the entire play to fail of effectiveness and so to remain a singularly unsatisfactory presentation of the event.

In Lady Gregory's version, Jesus is again the Biblical figure, but he is given peculiar individuality by the comments of the other characters about him. The Roman Seargent Marcus says of Jesus on trial before Pilate: To look at him and to see his courage, and never a friend to help, you would nearly say him to be the only man in the place you would call a man, whether he is or is not of the gods." And again, Joel, a Jewish boy from the mountains, says of him: If he is or is not the Christ I cannot tell. But whether or no, he is the only whole gentleman in the world!"[1] And he is given a character of serene and pure brightness by the recurrent phrases, "Oh blessed Christ", or "Our white Lord" which adds meaning to the few words he says in his brief appearances.

Quite distinct from these three is the figure of Jesus as Max Ehrmann portrays him. We find a hint of this difference in the introduction which claims that the characters have been "stripped of supernatural embellishment". One suspects immediately that in his anxiety to do this effectively, the author will overshoot his mark and go to the opposite extreme of underrating Jesus -- which turns out to be the fact. In making him absolutely human,

1. Lady Gregory, Story Brought by Brigit, p. 75

he has made him something less than the highest humanity. In the first place, Jesus is strange-looking; for people speak of his startling white face and passionate eyes, so that some claim he is an ascetic, and others, that he is just the opposite. And he acts strangely, for his brother says: When my mother and my brothers speak to him, his eyes look far off and he moans within himself and says strange words.[1] Jesus thus becomes at least eccentric. Then, he is a man of anger, swayed by his passions, less poised than in the Dark Hours, less serene than in the Story Brought by Brigit. His indictment of the money-changers and animal-venders is very severe: "Within this house of prayer there are thieves walking in the cloaks of holy men; they are vipers that have learned to speak. They stand erect like men. They are evil. Woe to you that take bread from the mouths of the poor and clothe yourselves in fine linens!"[2] And when a priest in dismay bids him hold back the people, he says, "I will not!" and pressing forward in front of them, shouts above the noise and tumult. To the Pharisees also he is bitterly denunciatory. As they slink off after dragging in Mary Magdalene demanding that he judge her, Jesus cries savagely (!), "You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgments of hell!"[3] Upon another occasion he is "irritated" by a question from one of his disciples. Later in that same scene he commands his followers to buy swords and then in the next breath tells them, "For a moment, Matthew, you made me forget. Two swords are enough. We do not need

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act 1
2. " " " " 1
3. " " " " 2

more."[1] This would seem to indicate that even at this moment, when he was approaching final crisis of his life, his mind was not firmly sent upon what he was going to do. At the same time, he could inspire words like these from Mary Magdalene: "He was a rose blooming amid stones; he was like the breaking of dawn in the springtime, and like the twilight of the setting sun in the harvest time. When he touched me I grew still within."[5] Mr. Ehrmann's characterization of Jesus seems to me as a whole to be a very sincere effort to show his real human worth. If anything, it errs on the side of being too human, with a certain tempestuousness which makes a figure less lofty than we would have the Master of Men to be.

Of the four interpretations of Jesus just discussed, that of Marquis seems to me most satisfactory and convincing for the reasons given under the discussion of Jesus as he appears in the Dark Hours.

2. Judas

Judas as a person in the plays differs more from the Bible Judas, or rather, has had more added to him, than Jesus. All the authors who have included Judas are at one in seeking some extenuating explanation for his treachery in betraying Jesus. That is, they do not accept altogether the impression left by the brief Gospel narrative that Judas was entirely corrupt -- perhaps because a later age feels that Jesus would never have chosen a man of thoroughly

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act 3
2. " " " " 5

perverted character for one of his intimate circle of disciples; or, that after Judas had associated with Jesus' own fine, loyal nature for some time, he would have been incapable of turning against him for a paltry thirty pieces of silver. The general sentiment seems to be one of sympathy for his weakness and regret for his action -- which may or may not indicate the perhaps unconscious influence upon people of this spirit of Jesus.

To Max Ehrmann, Judas is a devout man and a dreamer. At the first, he believes in and loves Jesus. He says of him to Rabbi Meier:

> "We have often sat in the night under the open sky and listened to him. His voice is like music in the night. It is like the voice of a shepherd calling his sheep that have scattered. It is like far-away music soft and low. Sometimes he spoke to us and sometimes to his Father just a little beyond the stars. And we almost have seen his Father, and almost have heard the angels singing beautiful songs of the world that shall be." [1]

This speech, incidentally, is typical of the almost unnaturally poetic conversations which Ehrmann puts into the mouths of his characters. But Judas grows weary "of heavens that come not, of promises unfulfilled"; he begins to doubt Jesus, and resolves to bring matters to a crisis. Therefore he falls in with the wily suggestions of the Pharisees and agrees to betray his Master. As the soldiers are binding Jesus, Judas cries out to him to reveal his Messiahship, and after they have taken him away, Judas says, "Father, tomorrow thou wilt show Thyself, or by Thy absence, chastise a gentle fool."[2]

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act 2
2. " " " " 3

Even yet he has no conception of Jesus' real fate. His remorse when he does realize it sends him to Pilate's palace to plead first with the priests to withdraw their charges against Jesus, and then with Jesus that he call heavenly powers to his aid and release himself. His agony is very real, and heightened dramatically by Jesus' attitude towards him of continued kindliness with no resentment in it. This presentation of Judas' character, then, shows him as a disappointed visionary, consumed with bitter remorse when he finds that he has brought only shame upon one whom he loved regardless of whether he was the Messiah or not.

Lady Gregory devotes only a short space to Judas, and, quite in keeping with the whole tone of her play, allows no note of hatred to creep in with him. Even while the devoted women and Joel are upraiding him, they give the impression not so much of condemning him as of condemning his sin. Lady Gregory's explanation for his act is contained only in his own words as he accepts the bribe offered by the Scribe, "There is a devil come into me since yesterday, and little I care where he'll lead me",[1] which is not a very satisfactory solution.

Masefield's Judas goes to the other extreme and becomes a pious prude. He tells the priests that he had been a friend of Jesus until he heard the latter proclaim himself the Son of God. After which testimony at the trial, he turns to Jesus himself and delivers a little exhortation:

1. Lady Gregory, Story Brought by Brigit, Act 4, p. 24

> "I told you where all their flattery would lead you. Their praise has turned you from God. Humble yourself again like you did at first, and you'll be white as you were. Beat down your spiritual pride." [1]

Apparently Masefield intends him to be quite sincere in this speech. There is no sense of hypocrisy behind it. When Judas learns that Jesus is to be crucified, he is filled with horror: "He is a good man, not a bad man, not a blasphemer. He was only boasting." "I have sinned! I have sinned! I have betrayed innocent blood!" "I am accursed, accursed, accursed!"[2] All of these speeches savor of the melodramatic too much to be very acceptable. Masefield's final explanation of Judas seems to be that he betrayed Jesus on moral grounds, paradoxical as that may sound, expecting that he would receive merely correction at the hands of the authorities. But Masefield's drawing of his character is too vague and weak to be convincing.

Don Marquis' interpretation of Judas is unique and by far the most interesting. Judas thinks himself peculiarly under the influence of Jesus, and rebels against the feeling of helplessness this gives him. Jesus has read his thoughts, he knows, and so he is in a sense powerless to do otherwise than Jesus has foreseen. He is distraught and feels himself literally "possessed":

> "Spirits that come from God and spirits that come from hell, how can I tell which is which. They are all in me, I tell you, priest! - - I am a city full of spirits and they riot in the streets. It is Jesus of Nazareth who has done this thing to me! - - He has taken from me my power to be myself."[3]

1. John Masefield, The Trial, Act I, p. 31
2. " " " " " I, p. 36, 37
3. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, Sc. 1, p. 22

He is completely dominated by this almost hypnotic influence: "He and I have been tied together. We were born to be one another's bane. And we have felt that . . . we have felt that . . from the first."[1] Marquis resorts to an interesting stage device to emphasize this point still further. In the Gethsemane scene, the directions read that there shall be a flicker of fireflies "as if a line of sparks were shot out of one mind across the dark into another mind and shot back again," --as though between Jesus' and Judas' minds.[2] But after Judas has betrayed Jesus, he is full of remorse: "It is done! It is done! And I burn! I burn!" There is in one sentence a little suggestion of ambition driving him on in that he says he had hoped to be a chamberlain in the Kingdom, but this more comprehensible human desire is subordinated to the theme of the odd "psychic influence". For it is odd and rather incredible, too. It savors of the supernatural and seems psychologically unsound, upon sober consideration. Yet in reading the text, one is carried away by the intensity of Judas' emotion, and by the feeling of an uncontrollable force working in him and compelling him to act against his own will. There is an interesting contrast also suggested in the fact that while his character and that of Jesus must have been temperamentally alike if they were subject to this intuitive reading of one another's ideas, they made such different things of their lives. Altogether, Marquis' explanation of Judas at least captures the imagination and the sympathy, whether it be a sound explanation or not.

1. Don Marquis, The Dark Hours, Sc. 1, p. 28
2. " " " " " Sc. 2, p. 42

3. Pilate

Pilate has been treated more summarily, and may be disposed of in a few sentences. He is petulant in Ehrmann's version of the trial scene, unwilling to surrender Jesus to the bloodthirsty mob at first, but finally weakening to say in disgust, "Take your King! Crucify him!"

Marquis makes him proud and contemptuous of the Jews; a weakling in addition, since he clears his conscience of the affair by washing his hands literally and figuratively, but regrets his decision as he watches the mob lead Jesus to Calvary.

Masefield, however, makes Pilate appear rather impressed with Jesus and lenient towards him until Annas says that Jesus might inflame the populace into an insurrection against Rome, after which Pilate feels it his duty to condemn Jesus as an "important political prisoner" on this charge. But he is more judicial and fair-minded in this account than in the other two. Masefield also represents the priests as just judges, while Marquis has them act from motives of political expediency. Neither Pilate nor any of the priests is very strongly characterized in any of the texts.

4. Mary Magdalene

Mary of Magdala plays an important role in most of the plays. She appears three times in the Dark Hours -- first as witness before the priests, after which she runs out of the house

crying to Jesus that he is in danger. When he is being tried before the priests, she attempts to force her way past the officers on the stairs to get to him. Lastly, she is present, looking on at the Crucifixion. She is not clearly defined in this play.

She occupies more space in Ehrmann's play. Having seen Jesus but once, she is nevertheless captured or at least fascinated by his spirit. She talks of him to her lover Terreno:

> Ter.: Who is he that takes your love from me? . . I will not give you up.
> Mary: His love is not like yours.
> Ter.: Are his lips redder than mine with the thirst of desire?
> Mary: Never have his lips touched mine. Nothing in the world is as pure as his lips.
>
> - - - -
>
> Ter.: Or do his eyes tell you of some new joy in the woods at night?
> Mary: They tell of joy in other worlds.[1]

And she is finally wholly captured by the ideal of Jesus' life after he has saved her from being stoned as an adulteress, so that after his death she is strong enough to refuse all Terreno's offers of love saying she is dead to sin. And she is the one who, by the power of her spiritual love for Jesus, is enabled to see him in the spirit after his Resurrection:

> Ter.: You are crying out like a mad woman. To whom are you crying out? There is no one here but ourselves.
> Mary: (rising) Look, there he goes past the door of the tomb! Peter, Joanna, John, I have seen him! He has come out of the tomb![2]

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act I
2. " " " Act V

Like Ehrmann's other characters, she is a little strained, a little unnatural.

Maeterlinck, with Mary Magdalene as the heroine of his play, really tries to show her conversion, the struggle between what she has been, and the ideal which Jesus is forcing upon her consciousness. When she first appears in the play, she is full of native hauteur and cruelty. Yet even then, she feels herself "irresistibly drawn by the divine voice" to go and listen to Jesus. Freed from the influence of his immediate presence, she gives herself up to her very human love for the young Roman Verus. Again she is drawn by this mysterious spiritual force, and when Lazarus comes as a messenger, saying, "The Master calls," she is ready to leave Verus to follow him. By this time she has progressed so far in her understanding of Jesus' way of life that when Verus later offers her the alternative of accepting him, in which case he will not follow through his orders to seize Jesus, or of refusing him, in which case Jesus' life will be forfeit, she is able to say steadfastly: "If I bought his life at the price you offer, all that he wished, all that he loved would be dead. . . I cannot plunge the flame in the mire to save the lamp! I cannot give him the only death that would touch him!" After all Verus' arguments and pleading she simply says, "Go!" speaking "in a voice from another life, full of peace, full of divine clarity and certainty."[1] Maeterlinck has really made of Mary a symbol of human love surrendering to a spiritual passion. If anything, she is

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act V

too ideal. Maeterlinck and Ehrmann consider her from the same viewpoint and each of them, one feels -- at least a woman does! -- is a little sentimental in his treatment of her character.

These four figures are the most outstanding ones which appear in more than one play among the nine. Other characters are duplicated, but their parts are so minor that they need not be discussed in any detailed fashion. And in some plays, there are very strong individual characterizations -- as the Captain in Kennedy's The Terrible Meek -- but because they find a place in only one play, they are not considered in this section.

C. The Individualism of the Plays

There are many "individualisms", if one may call them such, giving the plays flavoring and spice, which do not come under the heads of either Plot or Characterization.

1. The Story Brought by Brigit

This play of Lady Gregory's is quaint and charming throughout, almost suggesting the folklore of the people. This effect is achieved in part because the play is associated with the legend of St. Brigit as the foster-mother of Jesus (when he and his mother were brought for safety to Ireland in King Herod's time!) It really improves on the legend by supposing Brigit to have been called to Palestine by a vision, to witness Jesus' death for mankind. The illusion of "folk-simplicity" is aided further by the Irish twist to the words -- the use of "himself" in referring to Jesus, and the curious grammatical structure: "It's no wonder a broken heart to be with her. Let her keen him and cry her fill"[1] -- which always has a fascination for our American ears. Furthermore, the songs introduced add tremendously with their minor cadences both of words and music:

Song Sung by the Women as Mary Comes

Isn't it great the pity,
The Child she crooned in her arms,
Och, och, agus, Och-uch-an!
The spear to be in his side,
The dust to be on his head!
Och, och, agus, Ochone-O![2]

1. Lady Gregory, Story Brought by Brigit, Act III, p. 83
2. " " " " " " " " "

Yet though the general tone is subdued, it is far from gloomy, and its gentle serenity is pricked out with bits of humor and bright imagination. The tramp, Daniel, though he plays a woeful part in the scene of the trial before Pilate, is nevertheless a comic figure as the chronic grumbler. As for the imaginativeness of the play, here is the scene in which John and the women are watching the Crucifixion from the distance:

> John: Give over keening. Look at that brightness.
> Brigit: It is like the far-off music of the birds of the plains of heaven.
>
> (Then John hears Jesus speaking such words as, "Behold, I stand at the door", and he repeats them to the women.)
>
> 1st Woman: Oh, our white Lord!
> John: - - -'and I will give him the Morning Star.'
> Brigit: That God may bring us all to the same joy his blessed soul returns to!
> Women: Oh blessed Christ![1]

All the persons of this play are simple and human. Jesus is not far off to them, but quite one of themselves, only holier and lovelier. No one is swept by violent emotion. As has been said above, the tone is one of bright serenity. From a poetic standpoint, this is to me the most satisfactory interpretation of the Passion story. From the content side, it is filled with the Christ-spirit which has eliminated bitterness and hate. Structurally, it is built with careful artistic skill, so that it has worth both from religious and dramatic standards of judgment. It would make an excellent Little Theatre production.

1. Lady Gregory, Story Brought by Brigit, Act III, p. 83

2. The Terrible Meek and Thy Kingdom Come

In a sense, Kennedy's Terrible Meek and Converse's The Kingdom Come are more closely akin to Lady Gregory's play than to any of the others, though strictly speaking, they can hardly be said to resemble it. Both, however, are highly imaginative. The Terrible Meek seems to me to try to do for literature what Von Uhde did in art -- to bring Christ down from the first century in Palestine to everyday terms and so make him real. It is perhaps a little shocking to read for the first time, when one has been accustomed to plays about Jesus all written inthe King's English. It is a shock, I say, to think of Mary Mother as "a peasant woman" who sometimes uses incorrect grammar. And a soldier who speaks with a decided cockney accent! Yet the most restrained and perfect English could never carry more feeling than lies in at least one speech of Mary's:

> "Is it cold you are, my lad? I cannot reach you yonder - on'y your poor broken feet and the ankles hanging limp toward me. My bosom warms and waits for you, hungering, yearning, like the day I bore you; but I cannot get up to you; I am cramped and cold and beaten: I cannot reach you yonder" . . .[1]

The Captain, as befits an educated man, speaks forcefully and well. Here is exposition of what the Kingdom may mean:

> "I tell you, woman, this dead son of yours, disfigured, shamed, spat upon, has built a Kingdom this day that can never die. The living glory of him rules it . . The meek, the terrible meek, the fierce, agonizing meek, are about to enter into their inheritance."[2]

1. Charles Rann Kennedy, The Terrible Meek, p.29

2. " " " " " " p.39

For all the "naturalism" of the play, there is reverence, sincerity, and depth in it, but it is rather over-emotional, as perhaps it would need to be since there is no action to hold the attention and carry the meaning. It would probably not appeal to a secular audience, and a good church audience would doubtless object to the language.

The same might be said of Thy Kingdom Come, though its tone is consistently lighter than in the other because of the children whose conversation is reasonably natural and child-like, for once. The conversation of the soldiers is also natural, full of slang and humor. "That old blighter Caiaphas ain't afraid of the dead. It's the livin' he's out after."[1] Or this:

> Soldier of the Coat (piteously): But I can't find no kingdom inside of me to serve.
> Soldier of the Thorns: Nothing but guts, hey? Well, guts ain't so worse.[2]

I should judge that this play might make better reading than acting.

3. The Dark Hours

For me, the Dark Hours is the most compelling presentation of the Passion, because it is so intense and full of emotion throughout, nor is that emotional at all sentimental. The conflict in Judas, for example, is presented very powerfully, and without quite understanding it, one is overpowered by its vehemence. Then too, Marquis has an eye to strong dramatic effects. There is the speech of Caiaphas which is so ironical for us: "Judas, this is a deed for which thou wilt be remembered through the ages."[3] And there is

1. Charles Rann Kennedy, The Terrible Meek, p. 56
2. " " " " " " p. 60
3. Marquis, Dark Hours, Sc. 1, p.25

Lazarus' entrance -- the messenger from God as contrasted with the messenger from Herod. There are the half-heard speeches of Peter as he denies his Lord, between the outbursts of the mob from the room where the trial is taking place. In fact, the action verges at times upon the melodramatic -- Malchus' death when he attempts to rescue Jesus, and the death of the blind man who witnesses for him in the mob in front of Pilate's palace. The technical difficulties of presenting the Dark Hours on the stage would be very great, especially in the third scene where there is a parallel set of speeches from the Judgment Hall and courtyard respectively, and in the last scene where all the actors are concentrating on something offstage. The Dark Hours is a play of historic realism.

4. Jesus: A Passion Play

The most interesting thing about this play is the desperate effort Mr. Ehrmann makes to show Jesus as purely human, even going to the length of having his body removed obviously from the tomb, so that he will not have to admit a physical Resurrection. Notwithstanding this fact, he has been sufficiently captivated by the life of Jesus, even shorn of its supernatural elements, to want to write a play about it. The most outstanding feature of the play itself is the extraordinarily poetic conversation in which the humble people indulge. The speech of Mary Magdalene quoted under the heading of "Characterization", is a case in point. Another is the conversation of the disciples in the Garden. And finally, the long monologue at

the end spoken by Joseph as he looks at Jesus lying dead before him:

> Farewell, strange youth, farewell! - - - Thou wast love and storm and fire and love again. God made thee to strive. A flame he set within thy breast. Farewell, gentle Galilean, I thought to serve thee better than to dig thy grave. Forgive me . . .[1]

This play seems to me to rank below Marquis'.

5. Mary Magdalene

This is a rather difficult play to estimate. I suspect that it suffers in translation, for one thing. For another, Mary Magdalene is not a real person as Maeterlinck has drawn her. Her conversion, which is a vital point in the play, does not actually take place on the stage, and so is weakened. There is no reasonable explanation for Mary's being drawn to Jesus in the first act, nor for her following Lazarus, in the second. If she was hypnotized into going, there was no virtue in her doing so. And it is difficult to account for her firm stand against Verus in the last act. But the theme is interesting of itself: the idea that Jesus' life or death lay in Mary's hands, and that she chose death on the basis of his own teachings.

6. The Trial of Jesus; Good Friday; The Upper Room

None of these three plays appeals to me as being a dramatic success, and I think enough has been said about them previously to justify only a few sentences at this time. The Trial and Good Friday are distinctly disappointing as proceeding from so able a craftsman as John Masefield. For me at least, they are lacking in

1. Max Ehrmann, Jesus, Act V

interest; they are not well constructed dramatically, and I cannot reconcile myself to the introduction, for no apparent reason, of the incongruous choruses. Nevertheless, several passages in Good Friday are memorable as lovely poetry.

The Upper Room, on the other hand, is weak because it strives to be dogmatic. Also, the verse is mediocre and full of "vain repetition", as the "Come, come, my lad!" with which the Innkeeper fills all available pauses. Strangely enough for a play of this type, the Resurrection is not included at all, and any possible dramatic suspense that might be created is destroyed by Mary who calmly refers to her Son as rising on Easter Day, when he has only just been crucified. There is no approach to a dramtic climax in the whole play, everything depending upon the sheer emotional effect upon the audience of seeing Mary and Peter and John and the Instruments of the Passion upon the stage.

D. Summary

For a very brief conclusion to this section, I am listing the plays in two ways: first in the order of their preference as literature; second, in their order of preference as dramatic representations.

As Literature	For Acting
1. Story Brought by Brigit	1. Story Brought by Brigit
2. The Dark Hours	2. The Dark Hours
3. Good Friday	3. Jesus
4. Thy Kingdom Come	4. Mary Magdalene
5. Mary Magdalene	5. Thy Kingdom Come
6. Jesus	6. The Trial of Jesus
7. The Terrible Meek	7. Good Friday
8. The Trial of Jesus	8. The Terrible Meek
9. The Upper Room	9. The Upper Room

Chapter Two

Modern Presentations of the Passion

We have been discussing the modern Passion Play chiefly as literature, and very little from the viewpoint of playing on the stage. There are, however, a number of bona fide presentations of Passion Plays which are acted, some annually, others at longer intervals. The most famous of these is the decennial Passion Play of Oberammergau, with which specific performance the term "Passion Play" is synonymous for the average person. But there are many other performances -- more than one would suspect. A list of those places in which such plays are presented -- i.e., those about which I have been able to find some definite information -- follows:

1. Oberammergau
2. Hoerlitz, So. Bohemia
3. Thiersee, in the Tyrol
4. Island of Hiva-oa, in the Marquesas
5. Island of Caldy
6. Tokio, Japan
7. Canada
   a. St. Jerome (near Montreal)
   b. Naremata, British Columbia
8. U.S.A.
   a. Mountains of New Mexico
   b. Los Angeles
   c. San Francisco
   d. Bloomington, Ill.

The character of the individual production can best be understood in the light of the purpose which has motivated its

performance. These reasons may be classified as follows:

1. Religious memorial of Thanksgiving
2. Religious Rite
3. Religious Instruction
4. Dramatic Values

1. As a memorial of Thanksgiving

Oberammergau

The Oberammergau Passion Play, as everyone knows, is a great and lasting memorial of thanksgiving, pledged by the citizens of the small town in gratitude for their deliverance from the Black Plague which ravaged the Bavarian Alps in 1633. Other towns had practices also as reminders of their release, but of these, only two have survived to the present day -- the ringing of the church bell at four o'clock of an afternoon in the village of Partenkirchen, and the great decennial performance at Oberammergau.[1] The pious disposition of the people appears in the Preface to the 1922 edition of the text. It is related how the citizens made a solemn vow, "and behold: This trustful confidence was not confounded. Not another person died of the disease, though many lay ill of it."[2] Since 1680, the Passion has been re-enacted faithfully at ten-year intervals, interrupted only by the Thirty Years War, and, in 1920, by the conditions resulting from the Great War of 1914.

All the work of preparation, both as to mechanics and

1. Wm. M. Sloane, The Passion Play, in The Outlook, Dec. 31, 1910
2. Intro. to Text of the Passion Play, 1910
3. Wm. M. Sloane, The Passion Play, in The Outlook, Dec. 31, 1910

actual training of the performers is done in the valley by its inhabitants. The text of the play has been a slow growth, to which the chief individual contribution was made by Joseph Alois Daisenberger, a priest born in the neighboring village of Oberau, in 1799. The lines are singularly evangelical, according to William M. Sloane, writing in the Outlook. The language "is grave, sedate, pregnant, simple" -- like a recital of the Scriptures. This same writer adds that this particular Passion Play is not strictly a play at all, but a series of living pictures. The performance, he says, is of interest only as one of the old mysteries. He finds a large amount of innate and unconscious ability in the actors, so that "there are style, finish, smoothness, and at times genius, in the performance".[1] And Otis Skinner says, "These Bavarian peasants were not inspired amateurs; they were disciplined actors."[2] On the other hand, Deems Taylor finds the Passion Play at Oberammergau a pious but tedious effort to improve upon the Gospel. The actors, he says, are afraid to be natural, and their very devotion to the subject-matter is their undoing dramatically.[3] Both Mr. Sloane and Mr. Taylor are agreed that their performance is lacking from a purely dramatic standpoint, but while the former attributes its weakness to the fact that the events are so familiar that all possible dramatic effect is eliminated from the start, Mr. Taylor says the play is sympathetic but unimaginative. The effect on the audience, however, is to carry one "out of the desert of pure reason".[4] This verdict is corroberated

1. W. M. Sloane, The Passion Play, in The Outlook, Dec. 31, 1910
2. Otis Skinner, Footlights and Spotlights, p. 320
3. The Passion Play, in The Literary Digest, May 15, 1920

indirectly by Otis Skinner's comment on the impression he carried away with him: "I left the village knowing I had been for a week among artists of rare quality -- men and women not only deeply reverent in their religion, but deeply religious in their reverence."[1]

2. Devotional

Hoerlitz

A short article in the New York Times last summer gave a brief sketch of a similar Passion Play which was being performed at that time in Hoerlitz, Bohemia. The original text for this play was written by a Capuchin monk, Martin Cochems, in 1816, with its basis in an old folklore book The Great Life of Christ dating from 1682. The Hoerlitz play is given in a wooden building with a regular stage, as opposed to the outdoor spectacle of Oberammergau. The general nature of the two plays seems to be the same, both in turn resembling the mediaeval miracle plays with tableaux covering Biblical history from Genesis on. But in the Hoerlitz play the tableaux are only to show history up to the time of the life of Christ, after which the drama proper of the Passion begins. In the Oberammergau text, the tableaux are given at the beginning of the real scenes and have symbolic significance. The author of the article tells nothing concerning the origin of the play nor how often it is presented, but he declares that it compares favorably with the more elaborate performance save for the Crucifixion scene which loses from being

1. Otis Skinner, Footlights and Spotlights, p. 325

played indoors with artificial stage surroundings.[1]

A recent article in the Theatre Arts Monthly speaks of a number of performance of the Passion which are to be seen every summer throughout the Tyrol, "characterized by the same sincerity, effective acting and unfailing reverence as the Oberammergau play." These performances are not based on the Oberammergau Passion, but on manuscripts firmly rooted in local tradition, which go back a century or more. The players' purpose is usually either devotional or patriotic.

Thiersee

This same article then goes on to describe one particular performance in some detail, that at Thiersee, which is devotional. The Mass is celebrated before the performance, and the audience partakes. There is a costumed chorus, "expositor", tableaux, and acted incidents of the Suffering. While the production is obviously more for a didactic purpose than for theatrical effectiveness, concludes the writer, the quality of the acting brings conviction and beauty to the performance, sincerity and " a living truth of feeling combines with outward truth to character."[2]

St. Jerome

A Passion Play among villagers in Canada was instituted two years ago at St. Jerome, about forty miles from Montreal. The drama, prepared by L'Abbe J. D'Avila Ethier, consists of five acts

1. Edward T. Heyn, Oberammergau in Bohemia, N.Y.Times, July 31, 1927
2. Sheldon Cheney, Peasant Plays in the Tyrol, Theatre Arts, April, 1928

and twenty-five tableaux, the text being heightened by skilful, artistic costuming, and professional lighting. Though the sponsors of the drama are Catholic priests, the acting is done by the people of the town themselves, and done very effectively, too, "in a spirit of reverence and sincerity which leaves every member of the audience deeply impressed by the atmosphere of truth which prevails."[1]

Bloomington, Illinois

In our country, there is a performance of the Passion by the Scottish Rite Players, in Bloomington, Illinois. This also is devotional in character, and on the programme is a special notice, "Owing to the character of the presentation there must be NO applause"! The play is described as being "offered as a tribute to the life and works of the Master Man of all ages, whose sublime sayings are woven like a thread of thick gold through all the teachings of Scottish Rite Masonry." The Prologue to the play is intended to symbolize all types of life, for "there is a period in the life of each (person) when he turns instinctively to the altar of God, and seeks in prayer and meditation the consoling beneficence of the great comforter, the lowly Man of Nazareth." The play itself consists of fifty scenes, "visualization" of incidents from Jesus' ministry, concluding with his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. It is a very sincere attempt "to bring to men and women the real meaning of Jesus Christ to the world."

1. Article in the Boston Globe, July 31, 1927

3. As a Religious Rite

Mountains of New Mexico

Strikingly opposed to this atmosphere of quiet reverence is the savage fervor with which a band of religious fanatics, known as the "Penitentes", in the Raton and Sandia Mountains of New Mexico perform the Passion as absolution for their sins. For centuries, each Good Friday afternoon, this group of ignorant Mexican-Indians has gone through the scourgings and the torture of the Passion with desperate realism. The highest honor, for which all the men compete, is the privilege of acting the part of the Christus, though this involves the cruellest sort of agony. The "fortunate" man who is taking the part, his back lashed and torn by actual scourgings, staggers under the weight of the cross to the spot representing Calvary. He is there bound upon the cross (time was when the victims were actually nailed on) which is then dropped into the hole dug for it, and hangs there for a half hour, while the rest of the people stand about him in a reverential silence. After the time has elapsed, the Christus is taken down from the cross, and nursed back to life with anxious care. It can readily be understood how those who take part sometimes die of exhaustion when it is over.[1] There is something appalling in the fanaticism which sees in this literal transcription of Jesus' sufferings a means to grace.

1. Article, Penitentes, in the Lit. Digest, Sept. 9, 1922

Island of Caldy

A less violent ceremony, also purely religious in intent, is the acting of a Passion Play -- almost as a part of the church ritual -- every Friday during Lent, by the White Benedictine monks in a monastery on the Isle of Caldy off the coast of Wales. In this production there is a curious mingling of theatrical modernity and severe devotionalism. The lighting is highly effective, the scenery simple. Instead of costumes, the actors wear their own white monkish habits. Those who take the part of women wear cowls to indicate the fact. "The actors move slowly through their parts, while voices rising from behind the curtains continually sing devotional music, and between the scenes the audience recites the prayers of the mystery of the rosary."[1]

4. For Religious Instruction

Hiva-Oa

Thus far, the Passion Plays presentations discussed have been if not tragic, at least solemn, in essence. We come now to a performance which has delicious, if unconscious, humor for the by-stander at least, though its intrinsic earnestness is unquestionable. On the Island of Hiva-Oa in the group known as the Marquesas, the good French fathers who devoted themselves to converting the cannibalistic tribe there, found that the natives were more impressed by certain cheap prints of scenes from Jesus' life, than

1. Article in The Living Age, July 29, 1922

by all the sermons preached. Determining to use the possibilities of visual instruction to the limit, they arranged series of tableaux --"living pictures"-- and from these arose the Passion Play which is "staged" annually during Holy Week. The natives themselves play the leading roles, and everything is suited -- with extreme Christian liberality on the part of the priests -- to their somewhat limited mentalities. For example, all the parts must be played, according to the ideas of the people, by persons whose characters fit them for it. Thus Judas is always a petty offender whose release from jail is obtained by the priests on condition of his playing the part. Mary Magdalene is played by one of the non-Christian island girls, and in some cases at least, her "stage redemption" has ultimately become permanent. The Christus is the only exception to this rule, and is selected purely and simply because he has a natural beard, the priests having an objection to the use of false whiskers! Everything is couched in realistic fashion, -- the Last Supper is a feast of native fruits spread on banana leaves on the ground; the Christus wears a halo of bright tin to indicate his divinity; Pilate is arrayed in a frogged military coat and high silk hat, the two emblems most suggestive of majesty and authority to the native mind. The play includes all the scenes in connection with the Passion, and though the action is crude and perhaps amusing to the white man, there is a reverent seriousness in it all which cannot fail to be moving. It is impressive as well, to con-

sider to what out-of-the-way corners of the earth this universal figure of Jesus has penetrated. [1]

5. For Dramatic Values

Japan

Possibly the most astonishing performance of all is that of a play entitled the "Christ" which was written by a Japanese non-Christian, and is presented by "pagan" actors. The play was written by the poet, Koryoku Sato, after he had witnessed the Oberammergau production and found it lacking in spots. The final scenes have been made marvellously effective through the lighting, for on the backdrop is revealed lightning, the rending of the temple veil, and the stampede of the terrified onlookers. His interpretation of characters is especially interesting as being done by one who has not been subjected to the pre-conceived notions of Christianity. Judas is potentially a criminal from the beginning, and of this Jesus is always conscious, though he attempts to prevent Judas from blackening his soul by treachery, through the hints he gives him from time to time. Mary Magdalene is changed "from a luxurious wanton through romance and sentiment to spirituality." (This suggests Max Ehrmann's Mary a little, though she never was quite freed from the romance and sentiment stage of her conversion.) Mary Mother, according to Sato, is middle-aged, querulous, and loving towards her son whom she constantly attempts to dissuade from exposing himself to danger. As to Jesus himself, "both Christian

1. Lewis R. Freeman, Passion Play of Hiva-Oa, Sunset, Apr. 1915

and non-Christian critics of Tokio unite in saying that Sato's conception of the Saviour well illustrates the character of a God in human form, whose real identity is admirably concealed where it should be concealed and revealed where it should be revealed, and that his voluntary martyrdom, for the time, entirely deprives him of his divinity so that he may more perfectly portray the extreme of human suffering and sacrifice as eternal examples for mankind." [1]

British Columbia

In a model "Home Theatre" on a ranch in British Columbia is a group of enthusiastic people under the direction of Carroll Aikins, whose aim is primarily to present worthwhile pieces of "living dramatic art". Such a one is their production of the Passion Play, "Victory in Defeat", which was produced rather with a "fixed and passionate belief in the seriousness of art and its lasting value to the community" than from religious motives. [2]

San Francisco

As early as 1879, there was a Passion Play produced in America -- out in San Francisco, with David Belasco as director, and James O'Neill playing the part of Jesus. The play had startling results in that it offended many, and started street-brawls because some of the less educated Irish-Catholic element vented their virtuous religious indignation upon perfectly peaceable Jews -- avenging the condemnation of Jesus by the Jews nineteen centuries ago.

1. Article Passion Play in Japan, N.Y.Times, Feb. 5, 1928

2. T. M. Vesey, Carroll Aikins and the Canadian Players, in Theatre Magazine, July, 1923

It actually became necessary for the court to issue an order for the withdrawal of the play from the boards. Belasco himself has written an account of the production, in his life story. He declares that the play changed his own life, but more than that, veritably transformed James O'Neill so that "he walked the streets of the city with the expression of a holy man on his face," and "the boards of the stage became Holy Land." The play was put on with a magnificent cast including two hundred singers and four hundred men, women and children in the ensembles. Naturally, the effect of the performance on the audience was also tremendous, so that when O'Neill came on the stage as Jesus, women knelt and prayed, and when he was represented as being tortured, many fainted.[1] Conscious art employed in the Passion Play then, may be as effective -- or more so -- as the artistic, untrained productions proceeding from the devoutly religious motives of simple people.

Los Angeles

"An American rival of the Oberammergau presentation" one writer has termed the annual Passion Play at Los Angeles which has been given for seven years. It is an outdoor spectacle in an amphitheatre in the hills, and thousands of people go to see it every summer, just as they do to the famous German Play.

1. Arthur Hornblow, Hist. of American Theatre, p. 315, 316, Vol. II

Summary

This thesis has attempted to describe critically and in some detail the revival of the Passion Play in the form of texts by contemporary authors, and presentations of Passion Plays staged for various purposes in different parts of the world.

The introduction is a brief history of the Passion Play as it originated in the church liturgy about the tenth century, and as it developed through the Middle Ages, inseparably connected with the larger cycles of miracle plays of which it formed a part. With the modification of the cyclical plays and gradual abandonning of them altogether, the Passion Play too came to an end.

Chapter One is a discussion of the contemporary Passion Play which has re-appeared in the form of texts by contemporary authors, and is treated just as any other subject of dramatic value would be. The general distinctions from the mediaeval texts are three: --

1. The subject matter is approached from a secular viewpoint.
2. Modern authors are forced to defy conventional attitudes by presenting Jesus on the stage, or to employ stage devices to prevent his actual appearance.

3. Individuality of each of the plays, as opposed to the patterned miracle Passion Plays.

The nine plays are then discussed in detail:-

1. The Story Brought by Brigit--Lady Gregory
2. The Terrible Meek--Charles Rann Kennedy
3. Thy Kingdom Come--Florence Converse
4. The Dark Hours--Don Marquis
5. Jesus: A Passion Play--Max Ehrmann
6. Mary Magdalene--Maurice Maeterlinck
7. The Trial of Jesus--John Masefield
8. Good Friday--John Masefield
9. The Inner Room--Robert Hugh Benson

First from the viewpoint of treatment of Plot in which it appears that different incidents are emphasized in different plays, thus giving an individual cast to each plot, in spite of the fact that the subject matter is perforce the same in each case. Second, from the point of view of character-interpretation, the meaning given to the figures of Jesus and Judas, Pilate and Mary Magdalene, -- how they differ from the usual conceptions of them which have arisen from the Gospel accounts. Third, the individualism of the plays, the distinctive bits added by the various authors which give individual touches to the common material.

In concluding this discussion, there are two lists of these plays

added, first in order of their preference as literature; second, of their effectiveness for acting.

Chapter Two approaches the modern Passion Play from a different viewpoint, that of the actual presentations which are given from time to time over the world. Some of these are traditional and have been going on for centuries, while others are in the nature of experiments and have developed only in the past few years. The purposes of these presentations may be classified as follows:--

1. Religious Memorial of Thanksgiving
2. Devotional
3. Religious Rite
4. Religious Instruction
5. For Dramatic Values

A consideration of the material as a whole would seem to indicate that the next step in the development of the Passion Play will be the writing of texts which modern dramatic technique has perfected with all the skill at its command, combined with the reverential and sincere atmosphere that accompanies the older performances.

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